

Western New Yorkers are all-too-familiar with the Peace Bridge expansion project. In December 2004, the US and Canadian governments agreed to place a new US Customs plaza on the Canadian side of the border. Called Shared Border Management, the arrangements recognized that there are significant constraints on building an expanded plaza on the West Side of Buffalo. Louise is extremely disappointed that the Department of Homeland Security unilaterally walked-away from Shared Border Management in the Spring of 2004. In response, Louise brought Secretary Chertoff to the Peace Bridge in June 2007 to meet with local elected officials and business leaders. During this meeting, Secretary Chertoff made a commitment to Louise to send an additional 62 customs inspectors to the Peace Bridge and to work with the City of Buffalo to finance a new US plaza and bridge.

In 2008, the Peace Bridge expansion project faced some additional setbacks. The Federal Highway Administration and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services have stated that more studies are needed to show that a Signature Bridge would not have a detrimental effect on migratory bird patterns or aquatic life in the Niagara River. There are also concerns about the bridge plaza's effect on historic neighborhoods in the area where the plaza is slated to be built. Rep. Slaughter believes that many of these problems can be solved by bringing Shared Border Management back to the negotiating table, and is working to ensure that this is in the discussion as the expansion project moves forward. The goal is not to delay the project further, as the project has already been delayed significantly, but to move forward with a plan that will work best for local residents, border officials, and the environment. While there are some hurdles left to be cleared, Rep. Slaughter is committed to working with the rest of the Western NY delegation, the Governor, federal regulatory agencies, and local officials to build a bridge as soon as possible in the smartest and most effective manner.